

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

Where can potential voters go to get information on political candidates and on controversial news issues? Public broadcasting, whether radio or TV, needs to offer reliable information at least some of the time. Freedom of speech would seem to give the public media the right to disseminate what they want to and leave out what they don't like. This behavior, however, doesn't serve the public interests. If public funds pay for media, then media must be responsible for presenting both sides of major discussions. Public broadcasting has been shirking their responsibility and I would like you to see that publicly funded media meets its obligations to inform the public of the whole truth.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

Margo Markowski
1245 Palm Bay Rd.
Palm Bay, FL 329057620